

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

UNCLAS STATE 039711

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, ET

SUBJECT: PRESS Q&A - ETHIOPIA DISTURBANCES

1. AT NOON BRIEFING WEDNESDAY, DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN MADE FOLLOWING RESPONSES TO PRESS QUERIES:

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING NEW ON THE ETHIOPIAN SITUATION, WHICH IS REPORTED BY ONE OF THE AGENCIES TO HAVE SPREAD TO NAVY AND OTHER FORCES IN ETHIOPIA?

A. YES. OUR PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THE SITUATION CLOSELY OF COURSE. AND IT APPEARS THAT THE ETHIOPIAN NAVY AT THE RED SEA PORT OF MASSAWA HAS TAKEN CONTROL OF THE CITY AND THE NAVAL BASE THERE IN A MOVE THAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN COORDINATED WITH DISSIDENT ARMY AND AIR FORCE PERSONNEL WHO HAD TAKEN CONTROL OF ASMARA YESTERDAY. THIS LATTER GROUP AT ASMARA BROADCAST A LIST OF SOME 22 DEMANDS UPON THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, SUCH DEMANDS BEING CONCERNED MAINLY WITH INCREASED PAY AND BENEFITS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL, BUT ALSO CONTAINING REFERENCES TO DESIRED SOCIAL REFORMS, SUCH AS BETTER PENSIONS AND MEDICAL CARE FOR DEPENDENTS, AND GENERALLY SPEAKING, I SUPPOSE, BETTER

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TREATMENT OF MILITARY PERSONNEL.

OUR PEOPLE NOTE THAT THE BROADCAST PLEDGED LOYALTY TO THE EMPEROR AS WELL. THERE HAVE BEEN ASSURANCES FROM THE DISSIDENT GROUP -- I SHOULD SAY BROADCAST ASSURANCES -- THAT NOTHING WOULD BE DONE TO HARM ANY PART OF THE ASMARA POPULATION IN ANY WAY.

AGAIN, AS WITH OUR REPORTING YESTERDAY, THE SITUATION IS QUIET. THERE'S NO SHOOTING OR VIOLENCE THAT WE'VE NOTED. CIVILIAN LIFE IN THE CITY REMAINS REASONABLY NORMAL. ALTHOUGH THE AIRPORT IS CLOSED, IT'S NORMAL IN ADDIS, ALTHOUGH THERE IS A SCHOOL TEACHERS' STRIKE STILL IN EFFECT THERE.

THE LAST REPORT WAS THAT WE HAD THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES GOING UP FROM ADDIS TO TALK WITH HIS DISSIDENTS. I SAW A LATER FBIS REPORT WHICH INDICATES THAT HAS GOTTEN QUITE COMPLICATED, BUT I CAN'T CONFIRM THAT.

Q. IS THERE ANY DEMAND CONCERNING U.S. PRESENCE AT KAGNEW?

A. NO, THERE APPEARS TO BE NO DANGER TO AMERICANS IN THE COUNTRY. OBVIOUSLY THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN ADVISED TO RESTRICT MOVEMENTS AND TAKE OTHER PRECAUTIONS THAT WOULD BE NORMALLY EXPECTABLE IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS. BUY THAT'S PRETTY MUCH THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF WHAT I HAVE.

Q. YOU SAID YESERDAY KAGNEW IS BEING PHASED OUT ANYWAY, ISN'T IT?

A. IT'S BEING PHASED OUT. THERE ARE ABOUT ELEVEN HUNDRED THERE NOW. SIC (IT WILL GO DOWN IN THE NEXT 18 MONTHS TO A HUNDRED.)
CASEY

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